

Pathophysiology, Pharmacology and Therapeutics: Connecting the Dots in Advanced Pain Management

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Disclosures

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Objectives

- Design and implement an assessment strategy for a pain complaint based on the physiology of nociception and the pathogenesis of chronic pain.
- Determine anticipated clinical pain relief based on current understanding of the pathogenesis of pain and mechanisms of analgesic action.
- Design a rational multi-drug regimen based on current practice evidence.



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What's on YOUR Dance Card?

- Physiology/pathogenesis of pain
- Interviewing a patient about a complaint of pain
- Correlating history and physical assessment information to drive drug therapy decision making
- Pharmacodynamics of analgesics / rational polypharmacy analgesic regimens
- Cases
 - Chronic pain / fibromyalgia
 - Acute pain in a cancer patient
 - Post-operative pain management
 - Complex end of life pain management



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Physiology / Pathophysiology of Pain

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What is this thing called PAIN?

- Pain that is an early-warning physiologic protective system
 - Essential to detect and minimize contact with damaging or noxious stimuli
 - Referred to as nociceptive pain
- Pain that is adaptive and protective
 - Heightened sensory sensitivity after unavoidable tissue damage
 - Assists in the healing of the injured body part by creating a situation that discourages physical contact and movement
- Pain that is not protective, but maladaptive, resulting from abnormal functioning of the nervous system
 - Pathological pain
 - A disease of the nervous system
 - Damage (neuropathic pain); dysfunctional pain

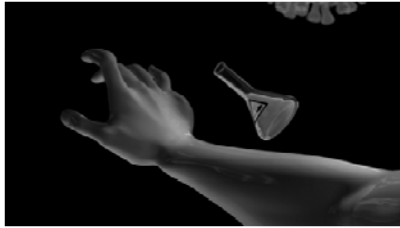


Woolf CJ. J Clin Invest 2010;120(11):3742-4

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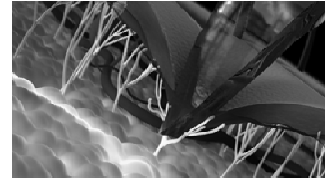
Initiation of Nociceptive Pain

- Nociceptive pain occurs as a result of the activation of the nociceptive system by noxious stimuli, inflammation or disease.



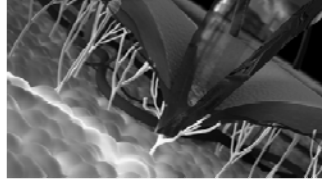
Phases of Nociceptive Pain

- Nociceptive Pain proceeds through five phases:
 - Transduction
 - Conduction
 - Transmission
 - Perception
 - Modulation



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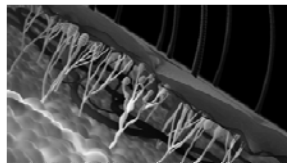
Neuropathic Pain Etiology

- Neuropathic pain involves injury or alteration of the normal sensory and modulatory nervous systems.



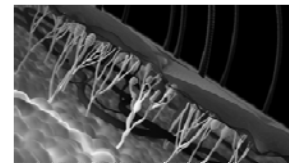
Neuropathic Pain Etiology

- Multiple processes are capable of producing sufficient neural alteration to produce neuropathic pain.¹
- These processes include:
 - Abnormal nerve regeneration
 - Increased expression of membrane sodium channels
 - Disinhibition of modulatory processes
 - Decreased expression of mu-opioid receptors



Neuropathic Pain Etiology

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Preparing for and interviewing a patient in pain

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The Initial Meeting

- Project calm, trust, and belief
 - Many patients have set unrealistic expectations regarding your meeting (good and bad)
 - We tell every patient "we believe you have pain"
- Let the patient tell YOU why they are there
 - Allow 3-5 minutes of completely open and uninterrupted discourse
 - Use open-ended questions during this time
- Avoid negative non-verbal behaviors
 - Crossed arms
 - Back to patient during charting in EMR



1. Shaw WS, et al. The effects of patient-provider communication on 3-month recovery from acute low back pain. *J Am Board Fam Med* 2011;24:16-25.
2. Ackerman E, et al. Motivational interviewing: A behavioral counseling intervention for the family medicine provider. *Fam Med* 2011;43:592-595.
3. Lolis NM, et al. Training medical students to manage a chronic pain patient: Both knowledge and communication skills needed. *Eur J Pain* 2006;10:167-170.

Symptom Assessment or Analysis

PQRST

- Provokes
 - Palliative factors
 - Temporal factors
- Quality
 - What does it feel like
 - How to recreate
- Radiation
 - When & where (i.e. back pain)
- Severity
 - Consistent method to rate
- Timing
 - When did it start (longitudinal)
 - When is it worse / better

OLD CARTS

- Onset
- Location
- Duration
- Character
- Alleviating / Aggravating
- Radiation
- Timing
- Severity



History of Present Illness

- Separate each pain syndrome and rank disability
- Ask for perceived causative events
- Identify functionality or activities impaired
- Obtain patient goals for treatment
 - We always ask "what would you like for us to do for you"
 - During this section of interview, education is paramount
 - What activities can we work on improving?
- Query non-pharmacologic interventions
 - History, duration, and result
 - Willingness to try non-pharmacologic intervention
 - Candid discussion on barriers to non-pharm interventions
- Specifically rule out current / previous psych care



Non-Pharmacological Interventions

- Physical therapy
 - Terrestrial
 - Aquatic
- Acupuncture / auricular therapy
- Osteopathic Manipulation Therapy (OMT)
- Chiropractic
- Massage therapy
- Yoga, stretching, swimming
- Surgical consultation / history
- Interventional consultation / history
 - Injections, blocks or pumps?



1. Brantingham JW, et al. Manipulative therapy for shoulder pain and disorders: Expansion of a systematic review. *J Manipulative Physiol Ther* 2011;34:314-346.
2. Posadzki P, et al. Osteopathy for musculoskeletal pain patients: A systematic review of RCTs. *Clin Rheumatol* 2011;30:285-91.

Medication History

- Self report versus health profession administered
- Current meds, dose, duration
 - Planned or accidental drug holiday?
- Previous medications
 - Successful
 - Failed (always dig deep regarding "failed" meds)
- Over the counter meds
 - Herbals, acetaminophen, NSAIDs, topicals
- Drug allergies



1. Malat J, Kahn DA. Clinical barriers to effective pharmacotherapy in co-occurring psychiatric and substance abuse disorders. *J Psychiatr Pract* 2011;17:360-367.
2. Montpetit LM, et al. Evaluation of a patient-completed versus health professional-conducted medication history. *Drug Intell Clin Pharm* 1988;22:964-9.

Focused Review of Systems (ROS)

- Hair to toenails
- Disease, med adverse effects, function
- CNS / General
 - Sleep latency, sleep duration, snoring, hygiene, fatigue
 - Mood, manic or hypomanic s/sx, suicidal or homicidal
 - Consider depression, anxiety, PTSD, or bipolar screen
 - Visual changes, headache
- CV / Pulmonary
 - Chest pain, shortness of breath, heart palpitations (methadone)



Focused ROS (continued)

- GI / GU
 - Nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, constipation
 - Last BM, frequency of BM, consistency of BM
 - Urinary retention or incontinence
 - Sexual dysfunction
- Extremities, Neuro, Musculoskeletal
 - Itching
 - Paresthesias
 - Weakness or foot drag / drop
 - Twitching or myoclonus



Social History

- Perhaps the most important piece of interview!
- Tobacco abuse?
 - How long, how often, how soon after awakening
 - Risk factor for opioid misuse, neurosurgeons wont work
- Alcohol use?
 - How long (ago), how often, how soon, how much?
 - We need volume vs. quantity (1 beer has wide variability)
- Recreational drug use?
 - I ask about each specifically
 - "what would I find if I ordered a drug screen today?"
- Violence, abuse, or rape?
 - Choose the venue and rapport prior to proceeding but its important information



Family History

- Concentrate on associated information
- History of similar pain problems in 1st degree relatives
- History of polysubstance abuse?
 - Patients will often be more willing to provide this info
 - Insight into family dynamics, support structure, and risk
- We will ask if brothers or sisters specifically:
 - Abuse or have abused street and prescription drugs
 - Abuse or have abused alcohol
 - Were sexually or violently abused during childhood



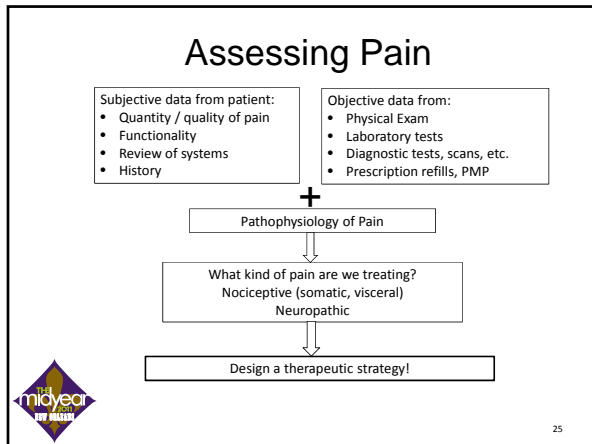
Conclusions

- Multi-dimensional assessment tools DO NOT replace a live interview / history
- Use a consistent method
- Allow open-ended time and then focus your time
- Avoid judgmental statements, replies, or nonverbals
- All information is important!



Putting it Together: Assessment and Pathophysiology

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The University of Iowa Hospitals and Clinics



- ### Palliating or Provoking Factors
- | Any Patient | Our Patient |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Touch ▪ Temperature ▪ Movement ▪ Sleep ▪ Co-morbidities ▪ Injections ▪ Medications | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Provoking <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Lifting ▪ Sitting at the computer ▪ Depression ▪ Vitamin D deficiency ▪ Palliating <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Move around ▪ Heat ▪ Flaxseed pillow ▪ Trigger point injections ▪ Massage ▪ Medications |
-
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- ### Medication Therapies
- Past
 - Corticosteroids (!)
 - ✓ Pregabalin (Lyrica®) (feet felt numb)
 - ✓ Milnacipran (Savella®) (relief didn't last)
 - Current
 - ✓ Tramadol ER 200mg PO Q AM
 - ✓ Duloxetine (Cymbalta®) 60mg PO Q AM
 - Cyclobenzaprine (Amrix®) 15mg PO Q PM (+/-)
 - ✓ Amitriptyline 200mg PO Q HS (helped initially)
 - Vitamin D 2000 – 4000 IU PO Q DAY (+/-)
 - Hydrocodone/Acetaminophen (Vicodin®) ? about 12 tabs/wk
-
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- ### Quality
- | Any Patient | Our Patient |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Neuropathic <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Sharp, shooting, lancinating ▪ Constant, burning, tingling, dysaesthetic ▪ Nociceptive <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Dull, aching, throbbing, swelling, stiffness ▪ Visceral <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Nausea, gnawing | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ “Flu-like”, achy ▪ “Run over by a bus” ▪ Stiff, harder to move in morning ▪ “Trigger points” in her back |
-
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- ### Radiating / Referred / Regional
- | Any Patient | Our Patient |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Localized to a specific region, extremity ▪ Radiating ▪ Referred | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Regional <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Localized to shoulder blades and neck muscles ▪ Hip “bursitis” ▪ “Arthritis” in feet ▪ Radiating / Referred <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Demonstrated via massage therapist |
-
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- ### Severity
- | Any Patient | Our Patient |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Uni-dimensional tools ▪ “Put a number on it” <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ NRS, VAS ▪ Mild, moderate, severe ▪ “Pick a face” <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Wong-baker ▪ Try to assess parameters <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Worst, best, average, now ▪ What is acceptable to pt? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Today 7-8 out of 10 ▪ Avg pain of 8 out of 10 ▪ Best pain 4 out of 10 |
-
- 30

Temporal / Timing

Any patient

- Onset
- Duration
- Patterns
- Chronic / intermittent
- Breakthrough pain
- Flares in chronic pain

Our patient

- Inciting event
- Maybe fall from horse
- Duration - years
- Chronic, with flares
- "Worse as the day goes on"



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YOU (associated symptoms)

Any Patient

- Other symptoms
 - Fatigue
 - Poor appetite
 - Poor sleep
 - Depression
 - Cognitive changes
 - Change in vitals

Our Patient

- Mood "depressed"
- Fatigue
- Tired
- Poor sleep
- Cognitive
 - poor memory
 - "foggy"
 - "mix up words"



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Functionality

Any Patient

- ADL's, appetite, sleep, social interactions, hobbies, work, enjoyment of life
- Multidimensional Tools
 - SF-36
 - McGill Pain Questionnaire
 - Brief Pain Inventory

Our Patient

- "Can't work out like I used to"
- Can't ride her horse
- "Any 'clear' morning is great"
- Sleep poor
- Can't take laundry up and down stairs
- Has missed work due to "fog"



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Review of Systems

Any Patient

- General / Vitals
- Cognitive
- HEENT
- Skin / nails
- CV / pulmonary
- GI / GU
- Extremities, neurologic, musculoskeletal

Our Patient

- Denies h/a, visual change
 - Dry mouth
- Memory problems, mixing up words
- Nausea/vomiting/diarrhea
 - Constipation - self treated
 - Urinary retention with difficulty emptying bladder
- Upper back and neck pain, hip pain, foot pain



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ROS Red Flags

- Cauda Equina Syndrome (Spinal Stenosis)
 - Urine or stool incontinence, saddle anesthesia, foot drop, weakness and / or radicular pain
- Opioid hypogonadism
 - Depressed mood, difficulty with sleep, sexual dysfunction, amenorrhea, alopecia
- Methadone red flags
 - Oversedation, new onset / worsening of snoring, heart palpitations
- Urinary retention
 - Difficulty initiating stream or feeling incompletely empty
- Opioid withdrawal syndrome
 - Anxiety, diaphoresis, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, others



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History

Any Patient

- Personal medical history / co-morbidities
- Social history
 - EtOH
 - Tobacco
 - Recreational drugs
- Family history
 - Depression
 - Substance abuse


Our Patient


- Depression
- Vitamin D deficiency?
- Occasional EtOH intake
- Non-significant family history



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What does it look like?


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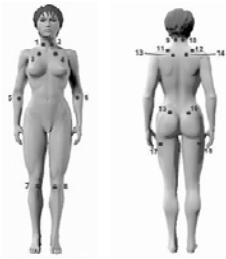
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Physical Exam


- HEENT
 - Constricted pupils, dry mouth
- Chest/CV/Pulmonary
 - Arrhythmia, turbulent air movement, rales
- Abdomen
 - Liver enlargement, bowel sounds, hernia
- Extremities
 - Skin / nail color, hair pattern/loss, temperature, edema
- Neurologic
 - Motor weakness, hyperalgesia, allodynia, anesthesia
- Musculoskeletal
 - Trigger points, tender points, inflamed joints, myalgias, arthralgias



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Classic Fibromyalgia Tender Points
www.fibromyalgialife.net



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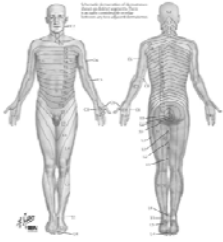
Classic Myofascial Trigger Point Locations
www.physiotherapy-health.blogspot.com




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Radicular Pain

- Where would we expect to see
 - C5-6 disc herniation
 - L4-5 disc herniation
 - T8 distribution




www.backpain-guide.com



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Labs / Interpretation

- Labs commonly ordered for evaluation
 - Acute phase reactants (ESR, CRP, anti-CCP, ANA, RF)
 - Thyroid stimulation hormone (TSH)
 - 25-OHD (vitamin D)
 - IgM & IgG Lyme titer
 - Vitamin B12 and rapid plasma reagin (neurosyphilis)
 - Various viral panels / screens
- Labs to monitor medications
 - Electrolytes
 - Renal, liver function
 - Urine toxicology screens
 - Bone density
 - Gonadotropin levels



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Diagnostics / Interpretation

- Electromyography and nerve conduction velocity testing
 - Anesthesia, paresthesias, motor weakness
- Plain film radiography, MRI, and CT (w/wo contrast)
 - Bones, nerves, joints, and internal organs
- Bone scans
- Sleep study / polysomnography
- Functional capacity examination
- Diagnostic nerve blocks and discography



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CT/MRI

- Arthrosis, spondylosis, arthropathy – osteoarthritic changes
- Spondylolisthesis – vertebral slip from position
- Spondylolysis – defect / fracture of vertebral body
- Spondylitis – inflammation of joint b/w vertebrae
- Nerve root impingement – impinged nerve root
- Neuroforaminal stenosis – space around spinal cord is smaller than normal
- Thecal sac encroachment – something pushing on spinal cord
- Disc dessication – dehydrated and flattened disc
- Herniation or protrusion – movement outside margins
- Annular rent or tear – destruction of the nucleus pulposus of the disc



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Does the rubber meet the road?

- Does clinical presentation = objective evaluation?
 - Radicular low back pain in L5 distribution
 - Does this match MRI findings (herniated disk at L4-5)?
 - Stocking – glove paresthesias / anesthesia
 - History of alcohol use?
 - Uncontrolled diabetes mellitus?
 - Headache
 - Is there cervical spine disease?
 - Are there upper back, neck or head trigger points?



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Pharmacodynamics of Analgesics: Rational Polypharmacy Analgesic Regimens

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Pharmacotherapeutic Options

- Non-opioids
 - Acetaminophen
 - NSAIDs
 - Systemic, Topical
- Opioids
 - Morphine, oxycodone
 - Hydrocodone, hydromorphone
 - Methadone, fentanyl
 - Tramadol, tapentadol
 - Codeine, meperidine
 - Buprenorphine
- Co-analgesics (adjuvant agents)
 - Tricyclic antidepressants
 - SNRIs, SSRIs (?)
 - Gabapentin/pregabalin
 - Other anticonvulsants
 - Anti-arrhythmics
 - Capsaicin
 - Ketamine
 - Skeletal muscle relaxants



Acetaminophen

- MOA – COX-1/COX-2 inhibitor with minimal peripheral effects, primarily central effects
- Analgesic (mild to moderate pain) and antipyretic
 - NOT neuropathic pain
- Weak anti inflammatory effects
 - Poor ability to inhibit COX in the presence of high concentrations of peroxides (found at sites of inflammation)
- Adverse effects / patient-related variables
 - Hepatotoxicity with overdose
 - Malnourishment, recent fasting
 - Alcoholism, regular and heavy use of alcohol
 - Pre-existing liver disease
 - Concomitant use of other potentially hepatotoxic drugs
 - Renal effects, cardiovascular effects, hematologic effects



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NSAIDs

- MOA – COX-1/COX-2 inhibitors both in the periphery and centrally
 - COX-1 (constitutive) – GI protection, platelet function
 - COX-2 (induced) – pain, inflammation
- Analgesic (mild to moderate pain; adjunctively for severe pain), anti-inflammatory and antipyretic
 - NOT neuropathic pain
- Available as topical or systemic therapy
- Adverse effects / patient-related variables
 - Gastric effects
 - Acute local irritation, systemic GI adverse effects
 - Cardiovascular, renal and cognitive effects



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Opioids

- MOA – Bind to opioid receptors (mu, kappa, delta)
 - Opioid receptors present periaqueductal gray and dorsal horn of the spinal cord, brainstem, thalamus, cortex
 - Opioid receptors are present where primary afferent neurons terminate in the dorsal horn of the spinal cord
 - Reduce influx of calcium at the cellular level
 - Block the release of presynaptic neurotransmitters (esp. substance P)
 - Increase potassium influx (↓ synaptic transmission)
 - Opioids reduce pain transmission by activating inhibitor pathways that originate segmentally in the spinal cord, and supraspinally
 - GABA pathway is a major inhibitor neurotransmitter system; opioid can activate the GABA system, which inhibits pain transmission
 - Opioid receptor presence in midbrain PAG, nucleus raphe magnus, and rostral ventral medulla help inhibit pain via descending inhibitory pathway
 - Opioid receptors have been found in the periphery as well
 - Methadone weakly inhibits NMDA receptor



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Opioids (continued)

- Tramadol and tapentadol have additional MOA
 - Inhibits reuptake of NE (both) and 5HT (tramadol)
- Analgesic (moderate to severe pain)
- Adverse effects / patient-related variables
 - Constipation, post-operative ileus
 - Nausea and vomiting / post-operative nausea and vomiting
 - Hypotension
 - Urinary retention
 - Myoclonus
 - Mental status changes
 - Sedation or cognitive impairment
 - Respiratory depression
 - Biliary spasm
 - Pruritus



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Tricyclic Antidepressants

- MOA – Increase activity in endogenous monoaminergic pain modulating pathways
 - Specific pathways originate from neuronal pools in the brainstem and descend to the spinal cord, where they release substances that inhibit the transmission of nociceptive impulses
 - Serotonin (5HT), Norepinephrine (NE)
 - By blocking reuptake of 5HT and NE at the synapse, TCAs increase activity in these pathways
 - NE > 5HT in the endogenous analgesia pathways
 - 5HT has a significant role in treating depression (prevalent in chronic pain)
 - TCAs also block peripheral sodium channels
 - Analgesic effect is separate from antidepressant effect
- Multipurpose adjuvant analgesic / neuropathic pain
- Adverse effects – antimuscarinic, sedation, orthostasis, cardiotoxicity, sexual dysfunction, drug interactions



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Other Antidepressants / Adjuvants


- SNRIs – duloxetine, milnacipran, venlafaxine, bupropion
- Tetracyclic compound – mirtazapine
- SSRIs (??) – fluoxetine, paroxetine, sertraline
- Corticosteroids (cancer population)
- Alpha-adrenergic agonists (clonidine, tizanidine)
- Cannabinoids



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Gabapentinoids (Gabapentin/Pregabalin)


- MOA – Blockade of presynaptic voltage-gated ion channels
 - Prevents generation of spontaneous ectopic discharges
 - Bind to presynaptic voltage-gated calcium channels and inhibit calcium influx and the release of excitatory neurotransmitters from primary afferent nerve fibers
 - May enhance overall GABA-mediated inhibitory tone
- Persistent neuropathic pain
- Adverse effects / patient-related variables
 - Dizziness, sedation, ataxia
 - Confusion, weight gain
- Other anticonvulsants: carbamazepine, clonazepam, divalproex sodium and valproic acid, phenytoin, oxycarbazepine, topiramate, lamotrigine, lacosamide



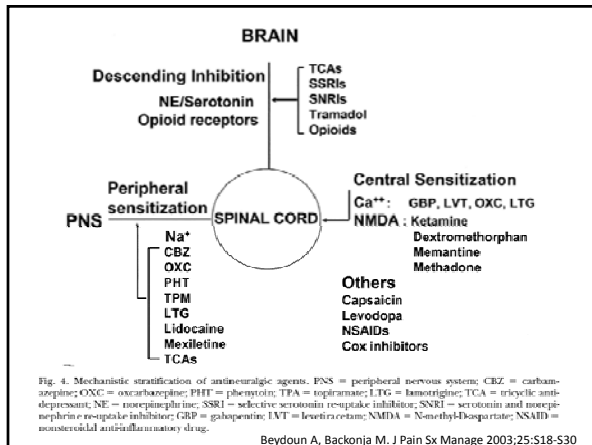
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Other Analgesics

- Capsaicin
- Sodium channel blockers
 - Lidocaine (i.v., topical)
 - Mexiletine, flecainide
- Gamma aminobutyric acid (GABA) agonists
 - Baclofen
- N-methyl-D-aspartate receptor antagonists
 - Ketamine
 - Other (dextromethorphan, memantine, amantadine)
- Ziconotide
 - Nonopioid intrathecal analgesic
 - Acts by blocking N-type calcium channels in the dorsal horn of the spinal cord




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Case 1


- Patient is a 44 year old woman with a history of fibromyalgia.
- Current medications include:
 - Tramadol ER 200 mg po qam
 - Duloxetine 60 mg po qam
 - Cyclobenzaprine 15 mg ER qpm
 - Amitriptyline 100 mg, 2 tabs qhs
 - Alprazolam 0.25 mg po qhs prn
 - Cholecalciferol 400 IU 1 tab qd
 - Hydrocodone/acetaminophen 5/500 mg prn
 - Cetirizine 5 mg po qam prn
- She is not content with her current level of pain control



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Case 2


- Patient is a 53 year old woman with a history of stage IIIa ovarian cancer.
- Patient reports to Emergency Room reporting low back / left hip pain that she rates as 10/10
- Her current analgesics include:
 - Meloxicam 15 mg po qam
 - Acetaminophen 500 mg po q8h prn
- What's the scoop?



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Case 3

- Patient is a 67 year old man who presents to pre-op clinic prior for a scheduled right TKA.
- History of peripheral sensory neuropathy in both feet related to his diabetes.
- Current analgesics include:
 - Morphine ER 30mg bid
 - Oxycodone/acetaminophen 5/325 mg 2 tabs q6h prn (8/day)
 - Ibuprofen 600 mg qid
 - Amitriptyline 25 mg qhs
- What's the plan for pain management?
 - Pre-emptive analgesia
 - Handling opioid tolerance
 - Increased monitoring



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Case 4

- JB – 55 year old woman with end-stage lung cancer admitted to hospice, now in inpatient unit receiving i.v. PCA hydromorphone 80 mg/hour with 40 mg bolus
- Patient continues to complain of pain
- Patient also complains of muscle twitching and jerking
- Patient is requesting assisted suicide, or at least palliative sedation
- What's a pharmacist to do?



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